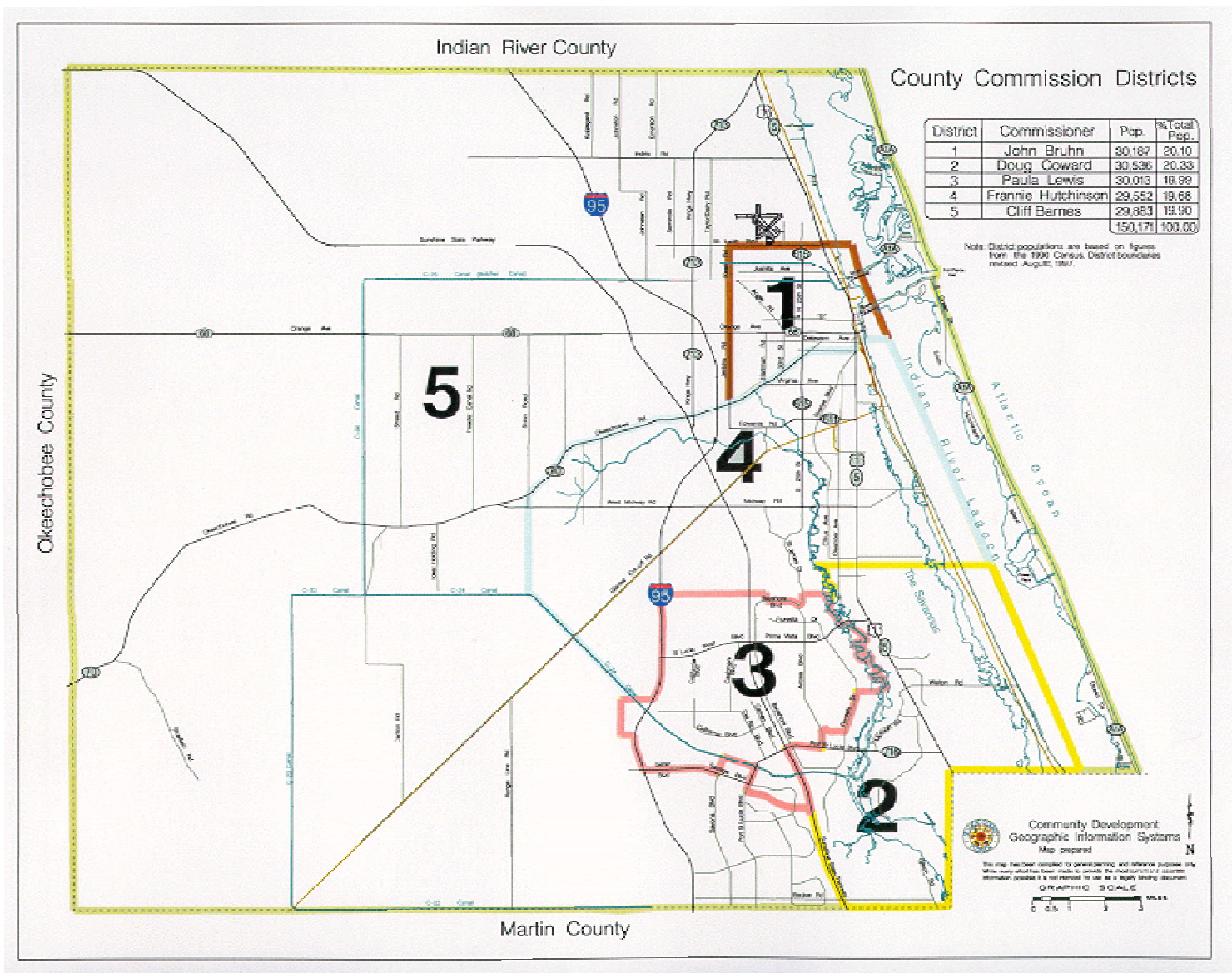


St. Lucie County, Florida



General Information

St. Lucie County is located on the eastern edge of the south-central coast of Florida in the heart of the Treasure Coast region. It is bounded on the north by Indian River County, the west by Okeechobee County, the south by Martin County and the east by the beautiful Atlantic Ocean. The City of Fort Pierce is the County Seat and is located approximately 60 miles north of West Palm Beach and 100 miles southeast of Orlando and all of that city's major tourist attractions.

Some key facts about St. Lucie County are:

Population

St. Lucie County's population in 2000 is estimated by the census at 192,695 which is largely concentrated in the eastern portion of the County within 5-10 miles of the Atlantic Coast. This is a 3% increase over 1999 and a considerable 28.3% increase since 1990. Most of the growth over the past ten years occurred in the City of Port St. Lucie (49%) followed by the unincorporated area (13.6%). The count conducted April 1st of this year placed the City of Port St. Lucie as the 15th largest city in the State surpassing West Palm Beach.

The population of the County is ethnically comprised of 79.1% white, 15.4% black and includes over 8% Hispanic. The median age is 42. Concentrations of the population are: Port St. Lucie - 46%; Unincorporated - 34%; Fort Pierce - 19%; and St. Lucie Village - less than 1%.

Employment

Services, tourism, agriculture, construction and light manufacturing are the principal industries within the County. While St. Lucie County is poised to take advantage of its location, climate and abundant workforce, the growth in employment opportunities has not kept pace with the growth in population. This has resulted in the County having an unemployment rate of 7% in 2000 which while improving is still higher than the state average of 4.3%. To counter this the County initiated an aggressive campaign to attract targeted businesses. Recent successes include a QVC call center, and the relocation of Convergys Corporation, an established customer billing service company. This year, the Board of County Commissioners has agreed to continue partial funding of the St. Lucie County Economic Development Council whose purpose is to attract higher paying, environmentally friendly companies to this area.

In 1999 the major areas of employment were:

Agriculture	4,741
Construction	2,938
Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities	2,454
Manufacturing	2,684
Wholesale/Retail Trade	12,158
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	2,353
Services	12,153
Other	182

Major employers within the County are:

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>
St. Lucie County School Board	3,400
Lawnwood Regional Medical Center (HCA)	1,400
Publix Supermarket	1,260
St.Lucie County Board of County Commissioners	1,009
Florida Power & Light	790
QVC	800
Winn Dixie Supermarket	650
Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute	650
St. Lucie Medical Center (HCA)	600
City of Port St. Lucie	535
St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department	527
Aegis Communications/IGI	460

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>
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Wal-Mart	456
Indian River Community College	446
Convergy's Corporation	423
Club Med/Village Hotels of Sandpiper	400
St. Lucie Medical Center (HCA)	600

Government

St. Lucie County is a non-charter county governed by a Board of County Commissioners consisting of five-members. The commissioners are elected at large to serve a period of four years. Elections are staggered to provide continuity between boards.

The Commissioners are:

Paula Lewis, Chair	District 3
John Bruhn, Vice-Chair	District 1
Doug Coward	District 2
Frannie Hutchinson	District 4
Cliff Barnes	District 5

The County is managed on a daily basis by a professional administrator, Douglas Anderson, who is appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.

Education

The public school system is county-wide and is governed by the School Board consisting of five members each elected for a four-year term. The school system is comprised of 24 elementary schools (grades K-5), six middle schools (grades 6-8) and five high schools. St. Lucie County also has one exceptional student education center, two magnet schools, and two alternative schools. The school system employs approximately 1,500 teachers and 1,100 support staff.

Higher educational resources within the County include: Indian River Community College (IRCC) and extension campuses of Florida Atlantic University, University of Florida, and Barry University. These prestigious schools enable an individual to obtain a four-year degree without having to leave the area.

Other Resources

St. Lucie County is situated in an area where the Florida Turnpike, Interstate 95, US Highway 1, the St. Lucie County International Airport, the Port of Fort Pierce, and the Florida East Coast Railway system are in close proximity to each other. This provides for easy access to all the County has to offer as well as superior commercial distribution opportunities.

The County is also the home of two prestigious research facilities -- Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute and the Smithsonian Marine Station, Fort Pierce. Additionally, The University of Florida has established an agricultural research center in the County, and the United States Department of Agriculture has selected St. Lucie County as a location for a research facility.

The St. Lucie County Sports Complex is the site of many public events and includes a modern baseball stadium and practice fields that serve as the spring training home of the New York Mets baseball team. It is also home of the St. Lucie Mets, a local farm club that provides near major league quality baseball action for fans at a very affordable rate.

The County is served by three local law enforcement departments. The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department services primarily the unincorporated area. The Fort Pierce Police Department and the Port St. Lucie Police Departments service their respective cities. The three work closely to ensure St. Lucie County is a safe place to work and live.

Incorporated Municipalities

Fort Pierce (38,732) serves as the County Seat and covers 21 square miles. Its history dates back to the Seminole Indian Wars when Army Lt. Col Benjamin Kendrick Pierce established a fort at the site in 1837. After the fighting ended, Fort Pierce remained as a permanent settlement. Water transportation and fishing marked the early economy, along with the production of pineapple (a crop that was eventually replaced with citrus). Fort Pierce remains the commercial center of St. Lucie County, although it is smaller in population and land area than Port St. Lucie. The City of Fort Pierce is governed by a five-member city commission that employs a professional manager.

The City of Port St. Lucie (pop. 103,072) is the largest city both geographically and in terms of population. It covers 80 square miles. It was incorporated in 1961 as a residential community and was originally developed in large measure as a retirement community by the General Development Corporation. The City of Port St. Lucie is governed by a five-member city council and also employs a professional manager.

St. Lucie Village (pop. 614) is a small enclave covering 1.5 square miles of territory in North St. Lucie County along the Indian River.